

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations



Washington Office for Advocacy

1320 18th Street, Suite 300B Washington, DC 20036

(202) 296-4672 x15

fax (202) 296-4673

rkeithan@uua.org

www.uua.org/uuawo

Rob Keithan

Director

July 19, 2004

Dear Representative,

On behalf of more than 1,000 congregations in the Unitarian Universalist Association, I urge you to oppose H.R. 3313, the "Marriage Protection Act of 2003." As a religious tradition with a deep commitment to democracy and justice, we believe that H.R. 3313 constitutes blatant misuse of the legislative process to undermine democracy and singles out one group of Americans- lesbian and gay people- for different and inferior treatment

H.R. 3313 would strip the federal courts- including the Supreme Court- of jurisdiction over challenges to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). DOMA is a law that profoundly affects the recognition of same-sex relationships, and like any law, should be subject to constitutional scrutiny by the courts. By shielding DOMA from federal judicial review, the "Marriage Protection Act" closes the federal courts to a distinct class of people, leaving them open to all others. By shutting gay and lesbian Americans out of the federal courts to challenge a federal Act that specifically targets them, H.R. 3313 would deprive this particular minority group of its ability to seek governmental protection of constitutional rights in federal courts and sets up a system of unequal protection- a dangerous precedent for the future.

Because we affirm the worth and dignity of all people and support full marriage equality for gays and lesbians, the Unitarian Universalist Association opposed the passage of DOMA in 1996. We also support the right of gay and lesbian Americans to challenge the constitutionality of DOMA, a right that would be denied by the "Marriage Protection Act." The Act is tremendously destructive in that it suggests that Congress could -- and should -- restrict the jurisdiction of federal courts whenever a majority of Congress backs a particular position on a controversial issue -- especially one involving the legal rights of a minority group.

Finally, we are troubled that Congress would spend time on this bill when there are so many critical issues facing the nation, including serious budget shortfalls, ongoing conflict in Iraq, and reauthorizing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). In order to focus on these real problems and protect gay and lesbian Americans from discrimination, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations urges you to oppose H.R. 3313, the "Marriage Protection Act of 2003."

Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information.

In Faith,

Robert C. Keithan